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General Assembly

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Human Rights Council
Twenty-eighth session
Agenda item 2
Annual report of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights and reports of the Office of the High Commissioner and the Secretary-General

Resolution adopted by the Human Rights Council

28/1. Composition of staff of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights

The Human Rights Council,

Recalling paragraph 5 (g) of General Assembly resolution 60/251 of 15 March 2006, in which the Assembly decided that the Human Rights Council should assume the role and responsibilities of the Commission on Human Rights relating to the work of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, as decided by the Assembly in its resolution 48/141 of 20 December 1993,

Taking note of all relevant resolutions on this issue adopted by the General Assembly, the Commission on Human Rights and the Human Rights Council,

Taking note also of the report of the High Commissioner on the composition of the staff of the Office of the High Commissioner,[1]

Recalling the reports of the Joint Inspection Unit on the follow-up to the management review of the Office of the High Commissioner[2] and on the funding and staffing of the Office,[3]

Bearing in mind that an imbalance in the composition of the staff could diminish the effectiveness of the work of the Office of the High Commissioner if it is perceived to be culturally biased and unrepresentative of the United Nations as a whole,

Reiterating its concern that, in spite of stated efforts by the Office of the High Commissioner, the situation whereby one region accounts for 49 per cent remains,

[1] A/HRC/27/18.
[2] A/59/65-E/2004/48 and Add.1.
[3] JIU/REP/2007/8.

Reaffirming the importance of continuing ongoing efforts to address the imbalance regarding the regional representation of the staff of the Office of the High Commissioner, most notably in senior management positions,

Noting with concern that the dependence of the Office of the High Commissioner on extrabudgetary resources is at the heart of the imbalance in the composition of its staff,

Underlining that the paramount consideration for employing staff at every level is the need for the highest standards of efficiency, competence and integrity, and taking into account Article 101, paragraph 3 of the Charter of the United Nations, expressing its conviction that this objective is compatible with the principle of equitable geographical distribution,

Recognizing that the Fifth Committee is the appropriate Main Committee of the General Assembly entrusted with responsibilities for administrative and budgetary matters,

1. *Expresses serious concern* at the fact that, despite the measures reported by the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, the imbalance in the geographical representation of its composition continues to be prominent, and that a single region occupies almost half of the posts in the Office of the High Commissioner;

2. *Notes with concern* the fact that, in 2013, three regions decreased their representation in the percentage of staff and that an increase was recorded in the overrepresentation status of one region;

3. *Welcomes* the statement made by the High Commissioner in his report[1] that enhancing the geographical diversity of the staff of the Office of the High Commissioner remains one of his priorities, and requests him to redouble his efforts with a view to redressing the current imbalance in the geographical composition of the staff of the Office, despite the budgetary contingency;

4. *Requests* the High Commissioner in this regard to establish specific and public targets and deadlines to be achieved;

5. *Also requests* the High Commissioner to work on the broadest geographical diversity of his staff by strengthening the measures aimed at achieving a better representation of countries and regions that are unrepresented or underrepresented, particularly from the developing world, while considering applying a cap on the representation of countries and regions already overrepresented in the Office of the High Commissioner;

6. *Further requests* the High Commissioner to implement further measures to eliminate the current imbalance in the geographical composition of the staff of the Office of the High Commissioner, in particular in the number of posts not subject to geographical distribution;

7. *Takes note with appreciation* of the commitment of the High Commissioner to remain attentive to the need to maintain the emphasis on the broadest possible geographic diversity of the Office of the High Commissioner, as stated in the conclusion of his report;

8. *Welcomes* the efforts made towards the achievement of a gender balance in the composition of the staff and the decision to continue to pay special attention to this issue;

9. *Recognizes* that, as at 31 December 2013, women accounted for 54.6 per cent of all staff at the Professional and higher level at the Office of the High Commissioner;

10. *Underlines* the importance of continuing to promote geographical diversity in recruitment and promotion at the Professional level and in particular in senior management positions as a principle of the staffing policies of the Office of the High Commissioner;

11. *Reaffirms* the vital importance of geographical balance in the composition of the staff of the Office of the High Commissioner, taking into account the significance of national and regional specificities and various historic, cultural and religious backgrounds and of different political, economic and legal systems to the promotion and protection of the universality of human rights;

12. *Recalls* the provisions contained in section X, paragraph 3 of General Assembly resolution 55/258 of 14 June 2001, on human resources management, in which the Assembly reiterated its request to the Secretary-General to increase further his efforts to improve the composition of the Secretariat by ensuring a wide and equitable geographical distribution of staff in each and every department;

13. *Underlines* the priority importance that the General Assembly continue to provide support and guidance to the High Commissioner in the ongoing process of improving the geographical balance in the composition of the staff of the Office of the High Commissioner;

14. *Requests* the High Commissioner to continue to improve his interaction with Member States, including within the framework of President's statements PRST/15/2 of 1 October 2010, PRST/18/2 of 30 September 2011 and PRST/19/1 of 22 March 2012, and giving particular attention to the composition of the staff;

15. *Takes note with appreciation* of the report of the Joint Inspection Unit on the review of the management and administration of the Office of the High Commissioner,[4] and decides to follow up on the staff composition issues highlighted therein;

16. *Takes note* of the note by the Secretary-General on the report of the Joint Inspection Unit;[5]

17. *Invites* the General Assembly and its appropriate subsidiary bodies to give consideration to the present resolution and, as necessary, to the relevant sections of the report of the Joint Inspection Unit[4] to the implementation of the present resolution on the composition of the staff of the Office of the High Commissioner;

18 *Requests* the High Commissioner to submit a comprehensive and updated report to the Human Rights Council at its thirty-third session following the structure and scope of his report and with a special focus on further measures taken to correct the imbalance in the geographical composition of the staff of the Office of the High Commissioner, including targets and timetables and other specific actions;

19. *Decides* to remain seized of the matter.

55th meeting
26 March 2015

[4] A/70/68.
[5] A/70/68/Add.1.

[Adopted by a recorded vote of 31 to 16. The voting was as follows:

In favour:

Algeria, Argentina, Bangladesh, Bolivia (Plurinational State of), Botswana, Brazil, China, Congo, Côte d'Ivoire, Cuba, El Salvador, Ethiopia, Gabon, Ghana, India, Indonesia, Kazakhstan, Kenya, Maldives, Namibia, Nigeria, Pakistan, Paraguay, Qatar, Russian Federation, Saudi Arabia, Sierra Leone, South Africa, United Arab Emirates, Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic of), Viet Nam

Against:

Albania, Estonia, France, Germany, Ireland, Japan, Latvia, Mexico, Montenegro, Morocco, Netherlands, Portugal, Republic of Korea, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, United States of America]